3/15/88 C2700-1

Automotive News.

March 14, 1988

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63rd year—$55.00 per year, $1.50 per copy

U.S. deficit worsens in auto trade

1987 imbalance up 2% to $46 billion

By Geoff Sundstrom
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

WASHINGTON — The U.S. automotive trade deficit in passenger cars and light trucks increased 2.2 percent in 1987 to $46.0 billion.

U.S. Commerce Department figures analyzed by Automotive News show that the $1 billion increase over the 1986 deficit resulted primarily from large increases in passenger-car shipments from South Korea, Brazil and Mexico.

The deterioration occurred in spite of a surge of 8.3 percent in export activity by U.S. makers during the year and declines of 7.7 percent in Japanese car imports and 20.8 percent in Japanese truck imports.

Although the U.S. automotive export improvement is a positive development for the overall merchandise trade deficit of $153.0 billion (customs value) for 1987, exports of U.S. cars and trucks are starting from an extremely small base.

The United States exported 2,759 passenger vehicles to Japan in 1986 and increased that number to 4,721 in 1987.

However, Japan shipped 2,417,509 passenger cars to this country last year, down 7.7 percent from 1986. Truck imports from Japan totaled 772,758, down 20.8 percent from a year earlier.

The export drive by U.S. automakers was fueled by a 131.6 percent increase in passenger-car exports to countries other than Japan and Canada and a 70.8 percent increase in car exports to Japan.

Exports of cars to Canada fell

see TRADE, page 60

LANCE BRAVES

ACTION AUCTION

Ford and GE create a new giant; 'captive business' troubles rivals

By Charles M. Thomas
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Ford Motor Credit's purchase of 20 percent of GE Capital Auto Auctions nearly 18 months ago has some industry officials raising their eyebrows and calling it "Ford's cradle to grave" program to sell and resell cars — making a little profit every step of the way.

General Motors and Chrysler Motors now contribute to Ford's profits by marketing their used vehicles through GE's network of 17 auctions, and neither has plans to withdraw their vehicles from GE.

But that doesn't mean they have to smile about it. Said a Chrysler spokesman, "We're not real happy about putting money into our competitor's pocket, but Chrysler has no plans currently to take our vehicles out of GE now that it's in bed with Ford. We are monitoring the level of service closely, but so far we are satisfied with GE."

And although GM and Chrysler officials add they are not shopping for auctions of their own, the Ford-GE handshake has stirred resentment in another quarter.

Leading independent auction owners and executives at competing auction chains claim that much of their business from Ford's and GE's huge lease fleets has been taken from them and transferred to

see AUCTION, page 64

GM divisions seek increases in production

By Michelle Krebs
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

DETROIT — After two years of constant production cuts, General Motors will boost output for the second time in a month as the automaker heads into the spring selling season low on inventory of several models.

Some GM divisions will request increases in certain product lines at this month's scheduling meeting, and they expect their requests to be granted.

They are requesting production increases for Buick LeSabre, Electra, Skylark and Century; Pontiac Firebird, Bonneville, Grand Am and Sunbird; and Oldsmobile Calais, Cutlass Ciera and Delta 88.

Dealers say the unexpected sales surge of the past two months — which is continuing into March — coupled with production cutbacks in late 1987 and early this year have left them with too few cars as spring approaches.

GM's inventory fell to a 62-day supply on March 1, compared with an 84-day supply a month earlier. The five-year average for the industry for this time of year is 68 days. GM's sales at the end of February were up 21 percent for the calendar year.

Mark Herrmann of Mark Buick-GMC Truck, Yonkers, N.Y., said he has a 41-day supply of cars, about half of what he had at this time last year. Sales, meanwhile, have risen about 45 percent, and he said he is concerned about having too few cars for spring.

"It would be a shame to lose this momentum," Herrmann said. "If we don't have the loaf of bread on our shelf, the customer will go to another grocery store."

Late last month, GM announced production hikes for some lines. The corporation said it would boost North American production by about 175,000 cars and trucks, or about 5 percent from early 1988 levels, through the end of the 1988 calendar year.

The increases were accomplished by resuming one shift at an idled plant, adding a second shift at three car assembly plants and scheduling overtime at two truck plants. However, the production pace still lags behind last year's.

Pontiac General Manager J. Michael Losh said his division will ask for production increases for virtually every model. Pontiac's days' supply dropped to 51 on March 1 from 67 last month. Pontiac sales at the end of February were up 23 percent for the calendar year. Pontiac especially wants more Firebirds, Bonnevilles, Grand Ams and Sunbirds.

Losh said that even though Firebird sales have been off and inventories appear healthy, spring is the best selling season for the sporty model. In addition, Pontiac recently extended through April 30 rebates of up to $1,000 on some Firebirds. Pontiac also extended rebates on Bonneville, Fiero, Sunbird, Grand Am and 6000 and added LeMans to the list.

Losh said that the division will take every Grand Prix that GM's

see GM, page 60

Auto workers and drugs, drinks

Labor, management unite to treat growing problem

By Louise Kertesz
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

A 43-year-old auto worker with 15 years' seniority has kicked the alcohol-drug habit for the first six-month stretch since his teens. And he has saved his job at Ford Motor Co. in the process.

That troubled worker — one of thousands in the industry — had been fired for excessive absences. Referred for help to the innovative UAW-Ford Employee Assistance Plan, the worker, whose identity is confidential, told his therapist that he had been a beer drinker for years with no visible adverse effects. But as he neared 40, he began to experience hangovers, which caused him to miss work frequently.

The therapist said the worker told him he began snorting cocaine four years ago because "the guys told him the drug minimized hangovers."

Two years ago, the worker moved up to smoking something even stronger — crack cocaine. His absenteeism increased, he was suspended and ultimately fired.

Once in the assistance program, the worker — typical of many — was first hospitalized for 28 days and detoxified. He now receives therapy in his community, something that helped get him reinstated at Ford.

His therapist says the worker is "beginning to understand that his passive, dependent ways" contributed to his addiction.

see TREATMENT, page 58

AUTOMOTIVE NEWS/JOE WILKINS

Worker consuming alcohol on break near plant

New GM victory on X-cars fogs safety probes

By Helen Kahn
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

WASHINGTON — An appellate court has given some 1.1 million 1980 General Motors X-cars a clean bill of health.

In upholding a lower court ruling made almost a year ago, the three-judge panel unanimously said the federal government had failed to meet its burden of proof showing a class-wide defect known as "premature rear wheel lockup."

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled against the government on

see X-CAR, page 62

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Costs kill '88 Chrysler P-car ragtop

By Mary Connelly
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

HIGHLAND PARK, Mich. — Chrysler Motors has canceled plans to introduce convertible versions of Dodge Shadow and Plymouth Sundance in the 1988 model year because of high conversion costs, but it is evaluating the feasibility of a 1989-model-year launch.

"That program has been put on hold because the costs got significantly out of line," said Charles B. Kitz, Chrysler Motors general marketing manager for Dodge cars. "We are re-evaluating it and looking at other ways to do it to bring the costs in line. We're a year away, probably."

Kitz said anticipated project costs tripled. Conversion of the subcompacts would have been handled by an outside supplier. —

ASC Inc., a major automotive converter in Southgate, Mich., had been working on development, a spokesman said.

Kitz said Chrysler is currently seeking ways to use an outside supplier along with additional company involvement in order to reduce costs.

"There are a lot of things you have to do structurally with a convertible, a lot of changes involved," Kitz said. "It gets very complicated with safety and rollover considerations."

Dodge discontinued the Dodge 600 convertible after the 1986 model year. Now, Chrysler Motors' only convertible is the LeBaron J.

Kitz also said Chrysler plans a January 1989 launch for the A-body Dodge Spirit and Plymouth Acclaim compacts, and that Dodge Aries and Plymouth Reliant, the company's K-car compacts, will be in the 1989 model year lineup.

"It's not in the immediate plan to drop the K-cars," he said. "The A-body is not a replacement for the K-car. It's a different kind of car."

He also said there are no plans for Dodge to carry a version of the coupe that will be produced by Diamond-Star Motors, the Chrysler-Mitsubishi venture.

Kitz also said he is more optimistic about 1988 sales than he was in January and that Dodge expects to sell 500,000 cars in the 1988 model year. The division sold 373,087 cars during the 1987 model year.

AUTOMOTIVE NEWS/JOE WILSDEN

Jerry Tucker, right, and his attorney, Joseph (Chip) Yablonski

U.S. court rebuffs UAW; new regional vote ordered

By Louise Kertesz
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

DETROIT — In an unprecedented decision, a federal district judge ordered a new election for a powerful UAW regional directorship and a seat on the union's international executive board.

At a two-hour hearing, involving three U.S. Labor Department suits and a private suit, the judge said an earlier election in the eight-state region was tainted by fraud. The region covers Oklahoma, Colorado, Texas, Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana.

The judge said that his written ruling, to be issued in two weeks, will order a new election, based on evidence that the UAW had misused union funds to influence the election.

This will be the first rerun of a UAW election covering an area as large as a region and comes after the first legal election challenge to a sitting UAW executive officer.

The new election will once again pit Jerry Tucker, a dissident former staff aide to Kenneth Worley, against Worley, director of Region 5, the largest geographical region in the UAW.

It's not clear whether the race will involve other candidates.

Tucker ran against incumbent Worley in 1986 and lost by less than one vote. The fraction of a vote is possible in the UAW delegate election system.

If Tucker wins the new election, ordered by U.S. District Court Judge Richard Suhrheinrich, it will put a vocal dissident in a powerful place within the highest levels of the union.

Suhrheinrich made his decision following a hearing in Detroit on charges by the labor department that the UAW had committed fraud in the 1986 regional election, which took place at a UAW convention in Anaheim, Calif.

The UAW said it would have no comment before it read the judge's written opinion.

The UAW argued that a rerun of the entire Region 5 election would be costly and unfair to delegates validly elected, but the union agreed to hold new elections in locals where irregularities were found.

But the court agreed with Tucker and the U.S. Labor Department that the entire election had been tainted by the irregularities, which included illegal delegates and use of union funds to support Worley. The labor department also charged that a Tucker supporter was beaten at the convention where the election took place, but that charge was not brought out at the hearing.

Tucker claimed his supporters in Anaheim were upset because UAW President Owen Bieber appeared the day before the election wearing a Region 5 jacket with Worley's name on it.

The U.S. Labor Department charged that Worley misused union funds by ordering $13,000 worth of jackets with Worley's name printed on them during an election year. At the court hearing, Jay Whitman,

see TUCKER, page 64

Cadillac's goal: Regain control of top-volume cars

By Michelle Krebs
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

DETROIT — Cadillac could eventually take control of production for all of its automobiles, making the division a full-fledged car company.

Cadillac General Manager John O. Grettenberger said Cadillac taking additional engineering and manufacturing responsibility under its wing is "a distinct possibility," though no such plan is imminent.

The DeVille and Fleetwood, Cadillac's highest-volume models, are the only Cadillac cars over which the division does not have total engineering and manufacturing control. Those models are built at General Motors' assembly plant in Orion Township, Mich., which also makes the Oldsmobile 98 Regency and is run by the Buick-Oldsmobile-Cadillac Group's Flint automotive division.

In January 1987, Cadillac regained control of the engineering and manufacturing of most of its models as part of an effort to restore Cadillac's image as a world-class carmaker and regain differentiation of its products from other GM cars.

Cadillac took over what was then called the B-O-C Detroit product team. The move gave Cadillac responsibility for engineering and manufacturing of the Eldorado, Seville, Brougham and Allante — cars which represent about 40 percent of Cadillac's sales.

The move last January also put Cadillac in charge of the Detroit-Hamtramck plant, which builds Cadillacs as well as the Buick Riviera and Oldsmobile Toronado; the now-closed Clark Avenue assembly plant in Detroit; and the Reatta Craft Centre in Lansing, which builds the Buick two-seater.

"Our objective right now is to prove to the corporation that it made the right decision in giving us the opportunity to control, engineer and manufacture the products we do have," Grettenberger said.

He said the change has made the division more responsive in resolving product problems brought to its attention by dealers and has cut the time for developing new products.

"There are no handoffs," Grettenberger said. Before, Cadillac, as merely a marketing division, gathered information, then told the B-O-C engineers and manufacturing people what it wanted. Now, engineers, manufacturing and marketing people, steeped in the Cadillac tradition, work together from the start.

"The engineers and manufacturing people understand what we're looking for before we ever write our marketing specs," Grettenberger said.

Grettenberger contends that giving engineering and manufacturing responsibility to the division is not reverting to the pre-reorganization of GM because layers of organizations have been eliminated.

"General Motors assembly division and Fisher Body are gone, and we have their responsibilities now for the Eldorado, Seville, Allante and Brougham that Cadillac didn't even have prior to the 1984 reorganization," he said.

Grettenberger: When "you are building two or three nameplates, there is an opportunity for one nameplate to become . . . similar to another."

The 1984 reorganization divided GM into two major car groups — B-O-C and the C-P-C. The groups were given responsibility for engineering and manufacturing, much of which had previously been handled by GMAD and Fisher Body, and the car divisions were assigned only marketing.

Consolidation of engineering and manufacturing under the wings of the other GM divisions is less likely any time soon, because shared car platforms and assembly plants make it more difficult to divvy up responsibilities. However, there are GM insiders who are arguing that marketing divisions should be in charge of their own products and plants.

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63rd year—No. 5224

AUTOMOTIVE NEWS (ISSN 0005-1551) is published weekly except semiweekly the fourth week in May at 1400 Woodbridge, Detroit, MI 48207. Second-class postage is paid at Detroit, MI and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to AUTOMOTIVE NEWS, Circulation Department, 965 E. Jefferson, Detroit, MI 48207.

TH!NK

Dodge and Aretha Franklin team up to battle drunk driving by teenagers

DETROIT — Dodge is one of three corporate sponsors of a music video starring Aretha Franklin designed to discourage teenagers from driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Franklin, a 17-time Grammy Award winner, is recording a new version of her hit song "Think" for the video, which is called "Th!nk, Don't Drive with Drugs or Drink!"

The video will be distributed to all TV music programs and edited into 30-second and 60-second television and radio public service announcements. Movie trailers, for use in motion picture theaters, will also be produced.

In 1985, Dodge underwrote the Stevie Wonder music video, "Don't Drive Drunk."

Dodge will also promote the message through sponsorship of the Dodge International Star Challenge, a series of regional celebrity auto races, and the National Collegiate Driving Championships.

At a press conference in Detroit last week to kick off the "Th!nk" campaign, Franklin said she was donating her talent because the cause is "very positive and a wonderful thing to be part of." Franklin is honorary chairperson of the National Association of Broadcasters' "Operation Prom/Graduation" campaign against substance abuse.

AUTOMOTIVE NEWS/JOE WILSDEN

Franklin is recording a new version of her hit "Think" for the video

DOMESTIC DAYS' SUPPLIES

	Mar. 1, 1988	Feb. 1, 1988	Mar. 1, 1987
Alliance	71	119	182
Eagle	61	58	117
Premier	193	167	0
Total Eagle	143	137	173
Horizon	79	63	84
Sundance	76	98	95
Turismo	112	143	140
Reliant	43	94	70
Caravelle	80	72	80
Gran Fury	93	80	160
Total Plymouth	57	66	87
Laser	0	0	78
LeBaron K	119	159	87
LeBaron J	58	132	78
LeBaron GTS	191	176	94
Fifth Avenue	68	98	121
New Yorker C	77	87	0
New Yorker E	26	140	93
Total Chrysler	66	124	92
Omni	97	76	78
Shadow	63	88	71
Charger	115	164	120
Daytona	67	73	84
Aries	55	99	61
Lancer	190	209	84
Diplomat	118	148	120
Dynasty	59	73	0
Dodge 600	60	70	81
Total Dodge	69	91	78
CHRYSLER MTRS.	67	101	85
Escort	85	86	89
Mustang	65	84	35
Tempo	48	46	68
Taurus	58	64	84
Thunderbird	90	82	56
Crown Victoria	61	59	74
Total Ford Div.	66	69	66
Lynx	89	66	91
Topaz	62	55	74
Sable	51	63	92
Cougar	96	104	93
Grand Marquis	49	52	60
Total Mercury	67	72	81
Continental	23	26	54
Lincoln	66	82	49
Mark VII	70	74	78
Total Lincoln	58	70	54
Total L-M Division	65	71	75
FORD MOTOR CO.	65	70	68
Skyhawk	78	109	251
Skylark/Somerset	67	114	148
Century	46	73	111
Regal	70	74	121
LeSabre	46	72	95
Riviera	99	67	0
Electra	51	54	107
Riviera	56	60	67
Total Buick	56	75	118
Cimarron	159	145	183
Allante	194	203	184
Seville	55	66	66
Cadillac	86	83	91
Eldorado	80	61	120
Total Cadillac	86	83	94
Chevette	117	148	57
Nova	58	208	162
Cavalier	63	75	50
Camaro	111	186	73
Celebrity	64	96	68
Corsica/Beretta	57	108	276
Monte Carlo	151	191	162
Chevrolet	88	102	94
Corvette	100	141	117
Total Chevrolet	69	110	81
Firenza	45	92	278
Calais	70	89	63
Cutlass Ciera	37	48	87
Cutlass Supreme	71	89	89
Olds 88	61	67	93
Olds 98	65	60	148
Toronado	62	68	97
Total Oldsmobile	56	66	96
Fiero	79	124	130
1000	28	50	80
Sunbird	57	64	98
Firebird	72	116	96
Grand Am	49	59	51
6000	48	51	106
Grand Prix	51	126	148
Bonneville H	37	57	0
Paris./Safari	54	63	107
Total Pontiac	51	67	90
GENERAL MTRS.	62	84	92
HONDA	11	17	6
MAZDA	51	52	0
NISSAN	96	75	85
TOYOTA	39	22	101
VOLKSWAGEN	127	147	123
DOM. TOTAL	62	79	81
Subcompact	54	64	—
Compact	53	68	—
Intermediate	64	87	—
Standard	63	72	—
Specialty	92	133	—

IMPORT DAYS' SUPPLIES

	Mar. 1, 1988	Feb. 1, 1988	Mar. 1, 1987
Chevrolet	140	166	146
Chrysler/Mitsubishi	115	180	109
Acura	24	18	41
Daihatsu	75	45	0
Honda	11	15	15
Isuzu	174	168	176
Mazda	53	57	88
Mitsubishi	111	107	57
Nissan	150	133	61
Subaru	98	83	101
Toyota	23	25	30
JAPAN	71	71	61
Audi	191	133	272
BMW	85	80	54
Mercedes-Benz	45	52	25
Merkur	171	154	159
Porsche	112	139	80
VW	85	75	114
GERMANY	88	78	83
Alfa Romeo	48	77	41
Festiva	108	121	0
Hyundai	50	41	22
Jaguar	48	40	27
Peugeot	187	129	92
Fontiac	179	152	0
Eagle/Renault	51	64	0
Saab	80	90	48
Sterling	67	91	17
Volvo	82	72	42
Yugo	148	140	26
Other Countries	78	73	39
Total Import Cars	75	72	58
Isuzu	110	92	93
Mazda	84	66	66
Mitsubishi	64	65	69
Nissan*	159	96	86
Range Rover	29	34	0
Suzuki	106	63	22
Toyota	43	36	54
Chrysler	111	144	101
Total Imp. Trucks	91	73	73
Total Imp. Vehicles	78	72	62

*—Includes domestic trucks.

Domestic stocks dip to 62 days

Inventories at 5-month low; import car-truck supplies rise

By Roger Rowand
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Inventories of unsold new U.S.-built cars as of March 1 were at their lowest level since October 1987.

Stronger-than-expected sales, spurred by retail cash-back offers, cut-rate financing and dealer incentives, were credited with the domestic-car stockpile reduction.

The industry stock, totaling 1,608,461 cars and amounting to a 62-day supply at current selling rates, was trimmed from 1,676,858 units, or 79 days, at the beginning of February and compared with 1,869,591 units, an 81-day supply, on March 1, 1987.

As of March 1, Chrysler Motors had an inventory good for 67 days, down from 101 days a month earlier. Ford Motor Co.'s represented a 65-day stock, down from 70 days. The General Motors car stockpile was 62 days compared with 84 days as of Feb. 1 this year.

Stocks of U.S.-built cars were divided this way as of March 1: GM, 51.05 percent; Ford Motor, 28.75 percent; Chrysler Motors, 16.49 percent and Volkswagen 1.26 percent. Nissan accounted for 1.13 percent of stocks; Honda for 0.77 percent; Toyota for 0.32 percent; and Mazda for 0.23 percent.

By market classification, the industry's stocks of domestic cars were divided this way: Intermediates, 42.54 percent; compacts, 23.65 percent; standards, 19.17 percent; subcompacts, 13.37 percent; and specialty cars, 1.27 percent.

There were 25 selling days in February this year, one more than in 1987 because of leap year.

Among cars with an extreme drop in stocks was Chevrolet Nova. The inventory of that line plummeted to a 58-day supply from a 208-day supply with introduction of a new 16-valve, dual overhead-cam engine option and force-feeding from a $1,200 rebate to buyers owning an import and $600 to those owning a domestic model.

Inventories of imported cars as of March 1 totaled 702,748 units, or a 75-day stock, compared with 661,940 units, a 72-day stockpile, a month earlier, and 531,520 units, a 58-day supply, on March 1 last year.

Stocks of unsold new imported light trucks shot up to a total of 208,446 units, a 91-day supply, from 184,158 units, or a 73-day supply a month before, and 222,077 units, a 73-day stock at selling rates on March 1 last year.

The industry's import-vehicle inventory total — cars and light trucks — on March 1 was 911,194 units, a 78-day stock at the current pace of sales. It was 846,098 units, a 72-day supply, a month earlier, and 753,597 units, or 62 days, a year ago.

Vehicle inventory by country March 1 was divided this way: Japan, 63.16 percent; West Germany, 14.31 percent; and other countries, 22.53 percent.

All inventory figures include vehicles at dealerships and in transit in this country. Import tallies include port inventories just as domestic inventories include factory stocks. Nissan truck figures, shown with the imports, include trucks made in this country.

Inventories of imports in this country, expressed in number of units, have grown steadily in recent years.

For example, on March 1, 1984, they totaled just 270,576 cars and trucks. A year later, the total was 337,599, and by March 1, 1986, it had reached 472,693 units. The days' supply figure has grown from 30 days in 1984 to the current 78-day accumulation.

Days-supply calculations are made at then-current sales rates.

Cash incentives grow for buyers and dealers

By Francis J. Gawronski, John A. Russell and Laura Clark
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTERS

Hoping to maintain their late-winter momentum, domestic and import automakers will fuel the spring selling season with widespread cash rebates on cars and trucks.

General Motors sources say the company may turn up the incentive fire on its domestic competitors by offering low-interest loans soon.

Ford Motor Co. extended its cash rebate program on selected cars and trucks until May 11 and added a rebate on a Mercury model. Likewise, Oldsmobile and Pontiac added models to their incentive lineups.

Yugo and Mazda announced new consumer rebates on their cars, and Mitsubishi and Mazda are offering dealer incentives.

FORD MOTOR CO.: Ford is extending its car and truck incentives to May 11.

Included are Mercury Tracer, $500; Ford Thunderbird and Mercury Cougar, $500; Thunderbird Turbo Coupe, $1,000; Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable, $750; Ford Tempo and Mercury Topaz with manual transmission or all-wheel-drive, $500; Ford Mustang with 2.3-liter engine, $750; and all other Ford Mustangs, $500 (except California and Hawaii where those models get $750).

Ford trucks: F-150 through F-350 models with manual transmission, $500; Bronco II and Ranger, $500; and Aerostar, $500.

Ford also increased its cash rebate on 1987 and 1988 Ford Escort and Lynx models from $400 to $500 and put a $1,000 rebate on the Mercury Cougar XR-7 V-8. Those incentives also run until May 11.

No dealer financial participation is required. Cars must be delivered before the program ends to be eligible.

MAZDA: Mazda's central and eastern import and distribution arms are conducting programs for dealers and consumers.

Mazda Motors of America (Central) has a truck incentive program for its dealers in 31 states.

The program, which runs March 1-31, pays dealers $200 to $500 per truck, depending on whether the dealer meets his sales quota or by how much he exceeds it.

Mazda Motors of America (East) is offering a U.S. savings bond to motorists who make a purchase after taking a comparison drive in a Mazda car and the designated competition from Toyota, Nissan or Honda.

The motorist receives a $500 bond if he buys the Mazda. If he purchases the competing model, he receives a $250 bond with proof of purchase.

The program runs March 1-31. No dealer participation is required.

MITSUBISHI: Mitsubishi Motor Sales of America has announced a cash incentive program for full-line and limited-product dealers and their sales managers.

Mitsubishi's sales program, which runs March 1-31, offers full-line dealers $500 to $1,000 per unit on sales of 1987 and 1988 Mirage, Cordia, Tredia and Starion models; 1987 Galant models; and 1987 and 1988 trucks, wagons and vans.

Dealers will receive nothing for the first five units sold; $500 per unit for the sixth through 30th unit sold; and $1,000 per unit for the 31st unit and above. An additional $500 bonus will be paid for each Starion sold and $250 for each Cordia.

The program offers limited-product dealers the same targets and cash payments for truck, wagon and van sales. However, they will receive a $500 bonus per unit for wagon sales.

Sales managers will receive a $2,000 bonus if the dealership achieves 100 percent or more of its sales quota.

OLDSMOBILE: Oldsmobile added its 1987 and 1988 Delta 88 and 98 models to its incentive lineup.

The division is offering a $750 rebate on Delta 88 and $1,000 on 98 models. The program runs March 3-31. No dealer financial participation is required.

PONTIAC: Pontiac announced a $500 rebate on 1988 LeMans models delivered through April 30. The program began March 7.

The division is also offering first-time new-car buyers a $600 cash allowance — in addition to the $500 rebate — when they purchase a LeMans during the program period. There is no dealer financial participation.

The $600 allowance for first-time buyers is also available on Pontiac Sunbird, Grand Am, Fiero and Firebird models. No dealer financial participation is required in those programs.

YUGO: Yugo America last week announced a $500 rebate on its GV and GVL models. The program runs March 1-31.

Cars must be purchased from dealer stock before the program expires. Dealers are asked to contribute $250 of the $500 rebate.

Yugo is running behind last year's sales pace. Yugo sold 5,358 cars in January and February, compared with 9,233 during the same period in 1987.

OBITUARIES

Sau-Wing Lam

HARTFORD, Conn. — Sau-Wing Lam, 64, director of Dah Chong Hong Ltd. of Hong Kong, which owns 12 import dealerships in New Jersey, New York and California, died Feb. 18.

Donald F. Valley

ST. CLAIR SHORES, Mich. — Donald F. Valley, 88, retired chairman of the board of National Bank of Detroit, died here Feb. 29. He played a vital role in arranging financing for American Motors when the company was faltering in the 1950s.

Reinhard M. Sarow

BRADENTON, Fla. — Reinhard M. Sarow, 74, owner of Sarow Sales, a Chrysler Corp. outlet in Saginaw, Mich., from 1931 to 1979, died Feb. 13. His son, William R. Sarow, owns Sarow Oldsmobile in Saginaw; his son-in-law, Bob Sellers, owns a Pontiac-GMC dealership in Farmington Hills, Mich.

Poling still sees 15 million sales

LIVONIA, Mich. — Despite last fall's stock market crash and a surprisingly strong start to the new year, Ford Motor Co. is sticking to the 1988 sales forecast it made before October: 10 million cars and 5 million trucks.

"We saw no reason to change our forecast after the stock market decline," said Vice Chairman Harold Poling. "We don't intend to unless we see some substantive change in the future."

U.S. cars and trucks sold at an annual rate of 16 million units during the first two months of the year. During that time, Ford increased its share of the car market to 21.2 percent — up from 20.2 percent at the end of 1987. Its share of the truck market has held nearly steady at 29 percent.

Poling made the comments last week at the company's Livonia Transmission Plant, where he addressed workers and handed out profit-sharing checks.

— David Versical

Aftermarket's survival tied to mastering technology

By Arthur Flax
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Distributors and installers of aftermarket and repair parts must adjust to changes in automotive technology and marketing if they are to survive.

More reliable cars, electronic and advanced technology systems, longer warranties and specialized service shops, such as fast lube and tuneup specialists, are changing the way the traditional aftermarket does business, said Kenneth L. Rogers, vice president, customer relations, Standard Motor Products.

Rogers addressed Automotive Service Industry Association members at the group's convention here. His company, based in Long Island, N.Y., manufactures ignition, fuel system and brake-repair components.

The association counts among its members the traditional "three-tiered" system of aftermarket parts distribution: warehouse distributors who sell to jobbers who sell to parts installers.

Independent installers, said Rogers, will stay in business only if they keep up with current technology.

"Many believe the new technology will make the customer a captive of the dealer, but the automotive aftermarket has mastered every technical challenge from automatic transmissions to solid-state electronics," he said.

"Repairing the new breed of vehicles," he added, "is a specialty reserved only for the dedicated technician who is willing to train and prepare for the high technology that will soon dominate our industry."

The companies that make and distribute aftermarket parts must help train the installers if the aftermarket is to prosper, he said.

"In our diluted industry, there are too many parts manufacturers, jobbers and warehouse distributors," Rogers said. "Those that are prepared to support and reinforce installers with clinics, advanced-technical training and management techniques will be the most successful."

Harold A. Poling, Ford Motor Co. vice chairman, told the group, "In 1965, a technician who read 5,000 pages of technical text had the ability to service any vehicle on the road. By 1987, the number of pages a technician had to master had grown to 465,000."

The Big I Show attracted an international audience -AUTOMOTIVE NEWS/ARTHUR FLAX

About 50 percent of all vehicles on the road have some electronically controlled systems, Poling said.

"Unless you're knowledgeable in these complex systems and unless you keep pace with what is sure to be the growing innovation in cars and trucks, you can't hope to satisfy your customers," he said. "And if you don't satisfy your customers, they won't be your customers for long."

Rogers said changes in technology will eliminate a number of products, but the changes present an opportunity to bring new products to market.

Carburetors and carburetor repair kits will be virtually eliminated, and longer-life spark plugs, power-steering belts and exhaust systems will slow sales of those items, he said. At the same time, a new market will open for such items as sensors and new and rebuilt power steering motors (when power steering becomes electronic).

"The rate of change has gone from evolutionary to revolutionary and those that fail to respond will have to withdraw from competition," said Charles B. Baker, president of Associated Marketing Consultants, Chesterland, Ohio.

Light trucks and import cars represent a growing opportunity for the aftermarket as their numbers increase, Baker said.

He predicted that by 1990, 5.5 million import vehicles including transplants will be sold in the United States, up from 3.6 million in 1985.

"This is the major growth area. But the real question is whether or not the powertrains will be sourced here and whether the opportunity will be there to sell replacement parts," he said.

"We are only starting to see independent garages doing more import work," he said. California is leading the way in shops that service both import and domestic cars.

More reliable cars will reduce the parts replacement rate and longer warranties also have the potential to threaten the aftermarket, Baker said.

"My impression is that the longer warranties were thought through by the sales folks as a marketing device with little thought given to maybe bringing more (non-warranty) service work into the dealer," he said.

Dealers will take advantage of the extended warranties, but the major dealers are more interested in selling cars than developing the service business, he said.

Import customers, however, have to date been comfortable with returning to the dealer for service.

"Collision shops will be a major growth area because import dealers typically don't put in body shops," Baker said. Changes in car design have also resulted in collision shops selling more hard parts like air conditioning and radiator components.

The do-it-yourself market is slipping, he said, particularly with the growth of fast-lube centers. However, there is a new opportunity to sell parts to the semi-professional mechanic who works on cars at home after finishing his regular job.

As the do-it-yourself market declines, the parts retailers will open service bays to recapture customers, Baker said. He added that the higher technology in automobiles will result in technicians being trained in narrower specialties.

The Automotive Service Industry Association convention was held in conjunction with the International Automotive Aftermarket Show.

The U.S. Department of Commerce designated the "Big I" show as one of 18 trade shows (in various industries) with high export potential. It invited a number of foreign delegations to attend, including distributors and manufacturers interested in buying U.S. auto parts or developing joint-business ventures.

William H. Crawford, account executive for the marketing development division of the Commerce Department, estimated that 1,500 representatives from businesses in foreign countries attended the show. U.S. embassies helped arrange the visits, but the U.S. government did not pay for the trips.

South and Central American countries, in particular, sent large delegations. The Commerce Department, however, was not involved in the previously reported meetings between Japanese automakers and U.S. component makers at the show.

The "Big I" show was co-sponsored by the Automotive Service Industry Association and the Motor Equipment Manufacturers Association and was managed by Pacific Automotive Show.

Service Index climbs 4% for month, all 1987

By Arthur Flax
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

The Automotive News Service Index finished 1987 with an increase for December and the year.

In December 1987, the service and parts business at new-car dealerships rose 4.3 percent above the December 1986 figure.

Service volume for all of 1987 matched the December increase, up 4.3 percent over 1986.

Service volume during 1987 was relatively consistent; six months were within a range of 104.0 to 106.1 percent of year-earlier volume.

January and May were low points with the Service Index; both months registered 98.3 percent of year-earlier volume. The high point came in November when service volume climbed 12.8 percent over the November 1986 figure. A service representative for a domestic manufacturer said that a weak showing in November 1986 was a factor in the size of the 1987 gain.

Dealers attributed December's service volume increase to the effects of severe weather on customers' cars, the addition of technicians and efforts to promote sales.

A Rocky Mountain Chevrolet dealer said volume increased as a result of mailers to customers and a severe cold snap.

A Midwestern Buick-Honda dealer said business rose in part because of the addition of productive technicians and the use of shop equipment to aid sales and save diagnostic time. Other dealers also added technicians.

A Western Dodge-Toyota dealer said, "The actual number of vehicles decreased (but the) marginal increase in dollars was due to an emphasis on selling all needed repairs on vehicles already in the shop."

A Western Cadillac dealer attributed his service volume increase to body shop business and an improved holiday schedule compared with December 1986.

An Eastern Chevrolet dealer whose service volume declined said labor sales per repair order fell in comparison with the year-earlier amount.

Shop parts sales (customer paid and warranty) led the business indicators in December with an increase of 8.8 percent over December 1986.

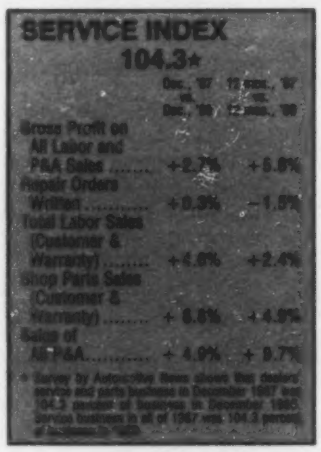
Sales of all parts and accessories rose 4.9 percent over the year-earlier month; total labor sales (customer paid and warranty) climbed 4.6 percent; gross profit on all labor, parts and accessory sales increased 2.7 percent; and repair orders written were up 0.3 percent.

Parts and accessories sales to off-premises customers fell 0.2 percent.

Sales of all parts and accessories led the indicators for the year with an increase of 9.7 percent. Gross profit on all labor, parts and accessories sales rose 5.8 percent; shop parts sales climbed 4.9 percent; and total labor sales were up 2.4 percent.

Repair orders written fell 1.5 percent.

Parts and accessories sales to off-premises customers were up 5.9 percent for 1987, compared with 1986.


SERVICE INDEX
104.3*
Gross Profit on All Labor and P&A Sales ..... +2.7% +5.8%
Repair Orders Written ..... +0.3% –1.5%
Total Labor Sales (Customer & Warranty) ..... +4.6% +2.4%
Shop Parts Sales (Customer & Warranty) ..... + 8.8% + 4.9%
Sales of All P&A ..... + 4.9% + 9.7%

Technicians' dilemma

Hi-tech cars require new service skills

By Wes Raynal
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

DETROIT — High-tech options such as anti-lock braking systems, traction control and active suspension promise to improve customer satisfaction, but may also leave today's technicians ill-equipped to perform repairs unless steps are taken to update training methods.

That concern was expressed by a seven-member panel of industry executives speaking at a recent SAE Show press conference here.

Panelists said a complete rethinking of the service technician's training must be implemented immediately.

"The person designing the present day and future car probably has a Ph.D and is running computer-aided-design/computer-aided-manufacturing systems," said Charles Probst, Cybern Systems Co. president. "The marketer of this car is most likely a MBA running a Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet program on his IBM personal computer.

"The buyer of the car has maybe a bachelor's degree and an Apple computer at home. But the person we all expect to keep this car on the road on a daily basis probably does not have any degree at all. He or she has a set of tools and a volt meter. If we're lucky, it's a digital volt meter."

Robert Anderson, Ohio Automotive Service Association president, said "Technicians of today and tomorrow will have to be academically able to follow the service business into the '90s." He added the rhetorical question, "Where and when will this educational process take place and at what cost?"

The panelists also agreed on the importance of accurate vehicle diagnosis each time a customer comes in for service.

Artificial intelligence systems will become the key to success in the service bay, said Alan R. Hinkle of Bear Automotive Equipment Co. As automotive technology climbs ever higher, there must be a parallel climb in the diagnostic equipment used by the technician.

"The magnitude of the consumer's concern for accurate vehicle diagnostics has increased sharply recently with the advent of affordable, high-tech cars," Hinkle said.

Bear is currently developing diagnostic equipment that will handle virtually all makes and models, he said. Further, that equipment will only need to be updated, but not replaced, as new vehicles are introduced.

Truck sales set record; imports skid

By Joseph Bohn
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

U.S. light-truck sales continued at a record level in February, but imports had a rough month.

All the domestic companies posted records for the month, while all the importers except Range Rover were off. Range Rover wasn't on sale a year ago.

Manufacturers retailed a new monthly high of 399,740 units, up 13.67 percent from February 1987. Their two-month total of 740,546 sales was up 17.92 percent over last year.

Market share for foreign firms dropped more than 6 percentage points to 12.68 percent last month compared with 18.90 percent a year earlier. For the first two months of 1988, foreign firms accounted for 14.74 percent of light-truck sales, down from 19.71 percent a year ago.

The imports retailed 50,701 trucks in February, off 23.70 percent from a year ago. Their two-month total of 109,184 was down 11.80 percent from last year.

Chevrolet had a particularly strong surge in February, based largely on its full-sized pickups. It pulled within 2,600 sales of Ford, after trailing Ford by wide margins for most of last year.

Chevrolet's February sales of 116,920 were up 29.40 percent over last year. Ford continued to lead the industry with 119,510 sales, up 10.52 percent from a year earlier.

Jeep was extremely strong with 19,548 sales, up 34.52 percent from like 1987. Chrysler's 63,433 sales of Dodge and Plymouth trucks were up 28.91 percent.

GMC with 29,628 sales was up 28.89 percent.

LIGHT-DUTY TRUCK SALES

Vans	15,648	13,717	27,747	24,127
Aerostar	15,241	11,788	27,548	20,279
Club Wagon	2,385	2,382	4,210	4,212
Ranger	24,081	25,832	46,432	45,304
Bronco	4,231	3,788	8,453	6,928
Bronco II	9,803	8,388	19,365	17,496
Pickups	49,211	41,442	88,382	70,374
Ford	119,510	105,135	222,139	185,708
Vans	11,480	7,120	20,684	12,975
Sportsvan	1,206	868	2,210	1,736
Astro	14,593	10,781	24,951	19,620
S-10	22,452	21,194	41,208	34,714
S-10 Blazer	12,515	13,487	23,866	23,524
El Camino	115	1,011	280	1,932
Blazer	3,029	2,246	5,401	4,154
Suburban	5,544	3,631	9,582	6,717
Pickups	45,956	29,925	80,246	50,734
Chevrolet	116,920	90,292	208,618	160,166
Vans	5,220	4,622	8,725	8,737
Ram Wagon	2,235	2,472	4,082	4,745
Voyager	14,835	7,413	26,593	12,361
Caravan	17,334	8,961	30,024	14,272
Mini Ram Van	1,380	1,068	2,488	1,943
Ram 50	8,833	8,700	9,561	16,531
Raider	877	1,375	1,595	2,314
Ramcharger	2,274	2,201	3,916	3,550
Dakota	7,269	7,966	14,627	14,226
Pickups	9,376	7,815	13,392	14,279
Chrysler	63,433	46,599	114,963	97,651
Vans	3,966	3,089	6,014	5,614
Safari	2,573	2,247	4,495	4,158
S-15	4,884	4,290	7,744	7,392
S-15 Jimmy	3,018	3,165	5,466	5,680
Jimmy	841	683	1,205	1,162
Caballero	15	120	48	268
Suburban	1,688	1,245	3,124	2,388
Pickups	12,748	7,631	20,703	13,367
P Model	321	385	698	1,077
W-4	97	91	199	208
GMC	29,628	22,967	49,738	41,916
Wrangler/CJ	2,961	2,067	5,163	3,951
Wagoneer	752	922	1,495	2,088
Cherokee	11,028	7,327	21,408	16,419
Grand Wagoneer	1,001	902	2,355	2,184
Comanche	2,971	3,171	5,696	6,066
J-10/J-20	35	159	78	311
Jeep	19,548	14,538	36,195	31,009
Toyota	15,616	20,437	34,200	39,846
Nissan	11,067	15,914	26,700	34,809
Mazda	8,165	8,559	16,424	16,911
Isuzu	5,808	7,236	12,816	15,064
Mitsubishi	4,120	4,421	8,077	7,327
Suzuki	6,085	6,672	10,377	12,331
Subaru	2	214	4	474
Range Rover	270	0	625	0
Imports	50,701	66,452	109,184	123,761
Industry Total	399,740	351,884	740,546	628,812

Mack stresses West as prime sales area

By Joseph Bohn
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Mack Trucks has been shoring up its Western U.S. market strength with specially tailored products and a revitalized dealer network, including the sale of some factory-owned branches.

Mack's Western region covers 15 states. Nationally, that region accounts for about 25 percent of all U.S. heavy-truck sales and 15 percent of Mack's sales, said Richard F. Murphy, Mack's vice president of marketing distribution.

The region's particular requirements also dovetail with Mack's niche-oriented marketing strategies and diversified product range.

Mack has created special models for Western operators. They include the Western Contractor, a specially optioned and weight-reduced RD model; a lightweight version of the R model for highway use; a Super-Liner long-nosed conventional; and an Ultra-Liner cabover.

Typically, Western region buyers go for more chrome and lightweight features. They also favor increased horsepower, typically V-8 engines geared to long distances and steep terrains. That led Mack to offer 450- and 500-horsepower V-8s and its new T-200 transmissions.

Mack has 52 fully appointed distributors in its Western region. They equate to what would normally be considered dealers. They have an exclusive contract to sell and service Class 8 trucks. Some also sell and service Mack's medium-duty Mid Liner. Mack has 245 Class 8 distributors.

Mack's definition of a dealer, by contrast, is someone who has an exclusive contract to sell and service its Mid Liner. Out of 245 Mack distributors, 212 sell and service the Mid Liner in the United States.

In addition to its 245 distributors, Mack also has 17 company-owned branches that sell and service its Class 8s and Mid Liner. If converted, they would become distributors. Seven of them are in its Western region.

Murphy said Mack may consider selling some of those factory branches in the future, depending on market conditions.

It has, within the past two years, assigned specially selected distributors for what were factory branches in the Los Angeles basin and the Bay area of Northern California, including San Francisco and Oakland.

Mack's commitment to the West Coast led it to continue operating such factory-owned branches in major Western cities while it sought prospective private franchisees. There are no remaining factory branches in California, though some continue to operate in Oregon and Washington state.

Murphy said Mack has no specific plans to convert any of its remaining factory branches but it would keep them under review.

Mack also has been developing a field network of highly trained sales and service outlets familiar with Western needs, said Joseph P. Rossetti, Mack executive vice president of marketing.

The company has made a sizable commitment to keep distributors up to speed on modern truck distribution practices. It also has special training schools for Western distributors to hone their management skills.

The company has been very careful in assigning new dealers, selecting only those with demonstrated product knowledge and management skills, financial solidity and a long-term commitment to the market.

Allison offers new automatic

INDIANAPOLIS — General Motors' Allison transmission division announced a new automatic transmission, designed specifically for vehicles in the 10,000- to 18,000-pound GVW class.

That is a market niche previously served only by light-truck automatics, which in many cases were not fully up to commercial users' needs, Allison said.

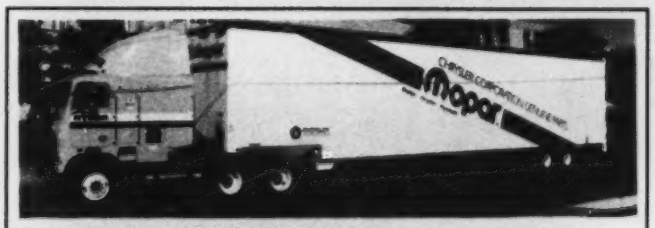
The new unit, the AT 542, is an adaptation of Allison's popular AT 545 and will accommodate gasoline and diesel engines up to 235 net horsepower.

Allison expects the new model to be particularly popular in stepvan-type vehicles and motor homes. Previously, those vehicles offered only passenger-car or light-truck automatics, the GM division said.

The AT 542 is also expected to be popular in 18- to 24-passenger school and shuttle buses; small city buses; and pickup, delivery and utility trucks up to 18,000 pounds GVW.

The AT 542 has a three-element torque converter and spur-type planetary gearing. The range clutches are disk-type, oil-cooled, hydraulically operated and self-compensating for normal wear.

The AT 542 is expected to provide the same reliability as the AT 545, but at significantly less cost.



Ryder inks deal to ship Chrysler parts
Ryder Freight Systems of Salt Lake City signed a three-year contract with Chrysler Motors to deliver car and truck parts to and from Chrysler depots, using new-design tractor-trailers.

U-Haul ups Navistar order

CHICAGO — Navistar International has received a $40 million order from U-Haul Rental Systems for an additional 2,000 of its new International model 1654 S-series "low profile" medium diesel models.

U-Haul, of Phoenix, Ariz., first placed an order for 2,000 model 1654 S-series units last year.

The trucks are being assembled at Navistar's plant in Springfield, Ohio.

U-Haul will match the 1654 low-profile chassis with special 27-foot, 1,500-cubic-foot van bodies.

Called the "Super Mover," the new trucks have special graphics on all sides of the vans.

There will be 50 different designs, each highlighting a nationally known or prominent feature of a particular state.

The 1654 is a special design developed for U-Haul by Navistar and Dana Corp.

It has a rear air suspension system that allows for height adjustments in loading.

The deck can be lowered to just 24 inches off the ground.

The truck is powered by an International 7.3-liter diesel engine, rated at 170 horsepower.

The 236-inch-wheelbase unit features an air-conditioned cab, 7,500-pound front and 15,500-pound rear axles with 4.33 ratio, 14-inch ceramic clutch, five-speed transmission, radial tires and a 51-gallon fuel tank.

GMC has also been a major supplier to U-Haul, which is currently updating its 60,000-vehicle fleet.

New Rockwell axles

Extra-heavy-duty units for Class 8 use

HOUSTON — Rockwell International has a new family of extra-heavy-duty single and tandem axles for Class 8 on- and off-highway trucks and tractors.

The new single- and double-reduction axles, offered by all major truck manufacturers, include six single-drive axles with gross-axle-weight ratings of 23,000 to 38,000 pounds and seven tandem axles rated from 48,000 to 70,000 pounds.

Leonard C. Buckman, vice president of product management for Rockwell's on-highway products organization, said the new extra-heavy-duty axles are based on the hypoid-Generoid gearing design of the new single-drive RS-23-180 axle, replacing the R-170.

Rockwell has not used the 180 design in a tandem axle before.

In using the 180 base, the company increased the size of the ring gear to the largest offered in this commercial class, and it also expanded its offering of gear ratios to provide more flexibility in specification, pulling power and durability.

Gear ratios of the single-reduction axles range from 3.73 to 7.17, while ratios of the double reductions range from 5.52 to 10.62.

The axles also feature a precision forged differential pinion and side gears for greater strength and resistance to shock impacts.

A key option on the single-reduction axles and tandems is the driver-controlled full-locking main differential that improves heavy load-hauling traction.

Rockwell is also phasing out its S/U/W-170 and 270-series single-drive axles and the tandem SR/SU/SW 170, 270 and 280 series.

It also plans to phase out the SFDD 4640 and SUDD double-reduction tandem axles.

Rockwell's new single-drive axles with 23,000- to 38,000-pound ratings include the RS-23-380 double reduction, the RS-26-180 single reduction, the RS-26-380 double reduction, the RS-30-180 single reduction, the RS-30-380 double reduction and the RS-38-380 double reduction.

Tandem axles in the 48,000- to 70,000-pound rating are: RT-48-180 single reduction and RT-48-380 double reduction, RT-52-180 single reduction and RT-58-380 double reduction and RT-70-380 double reduction.

All the tandem axles feature pressurized-filtered lubrication on the inter-axle differential.

FEATURE

IMPORTS ON THE RISE

Imports offer 86 more car models than domestics for 1988 model year

By John K. Teahen Jr.

A year ago imported cars edged domestic makes for the first time in the number of models offered in the United States. It was a close race — the tally was imports 310, domestics 300.

This year it's no contest. The domestics have trimmed their model lists. Many of the imports have expanded their lineups, and a few newcomers have entered the market.

As of Feb. 25, an *Automotive News* tabulation found 337 selections in import-dealer showrooms versus 251 for the domestic makes. (See large table at right.)

The import total is the highest ever; the previous peak was last year's 310. On the other hand, the domestic total is at its lowest since 1960.

The domestic count includes 28 transplant models — cars built in the United States by foreign manufacturers. If those models were subtracted from the domestic tally and added to the totals of their parent firms, the imports' advantage would be even greater.

The transplant makers and the number of models they build in the United States are: Volkswagen, 9; Honda, 7; Nissan, 6; Mazda, 3; and Toyota, 3. VW will retire from the transplant field when it closes its plant in Westmoreland, Pa., at the end of the 1988 model run.

Despite the disparity in total numbers, the statistically minded will note that the domestics have a huge advantage in number of models per make of car. The 251 domestic choices are divided among 17 makes of cars (12 from the Big Three plus the five transplants) for an average of nearly 15 per make. The 337 import models are shared by 40 makes for an average of just under 8.5 per make.

The 40 import makes marketed in the United States include four that have joined the ranks since last year's tabulation by *Automotive News*. The newcomers are Daihatsu (from Japan), Ford Festiva (from South Korea), Mercury Tracer (from Mexico) and Pontiac LeMans (from South Korea).

Three of those are captive imports. Only three of the domestic car divisions lack a captive import at this time. The holdouts are Buick, Oldsmobile and Cadillac, and many of their dealers handle imported cars through duals with Chevrolet, Pontiac or independent foreign makes.

Fourteen of the 40 imported makes sold in the United States are from Japan. West Germany and England have 6 apiece, followed by Italy, 5; South Korea, 3; Sweden, 2; France, 2; Mexico, 1; and Yugoslavia, 1.

Japan dominates the model rundown just as it dominates most everything else involving imported cars in this country. The Japanese makers offer 181 models, not including their transplant cars. West Germany is a distant second with 63. Totals for other nations are England, 21; Sweden, 20; Italy, 18; South Korea, 16; France, 13; Yugoslavia, 3; and Mexico, 2.

Toyota leads the model parade with 35, and Subaru has 30. Nissan has 25 imported models, and Mazda is fourth with 22. Those four makes account for one-third of the import-car selections in this country.

In keeping with their wide edge in total models, the imports have more choices than the domestics in each body style. Their totals aren't [illegible] apart in four-door sedans and station wagons, but the imports have twice as many convertibles as the domestics, and they have 60 more two-door sedans and coupes.

Here's the comparison:

	Imports	Domestics
4-door models	121	113
2-door models	155	95
Convertibles	19	10
Station wagons	42	33
TOTALS	337	251

Note that some automakers on both the import and domestic sides label their hatchbacks as "three-door" or "five-door" models. *Automotive News* counts only the side doors.

Automotive News uses the same criteria in counting import and domestic models. A choice of transmissions or engines does not necessarily constitute a separate model.

Vans and sport-utility vehicles are excluded from the totals for both imports and domestics.

Turbocharged units and four-wheel-drive cars are counted separately when they are priced that way. It is felt that those cars have enough differences in trim, equipment and mechanicals to merit separate-model designation.

Targa-type autos — those with removable solid roof panels — are listed as coupes, not as convertibles. ■

1988 IMPORT-CAR MODELS OFFERED IN U.S.
(As of Feb. 25, 1988)

	4-Door Models	2-Door Models	Convert-ibles	Wagons	1988 Totals	(Totals, Mar. 1, 1987*)
Acura	5	5	0	0	10	(6)
Alfa Romeo	3	0	3	0	6	(6)
Aston Martin	1	2	2	0	5	(5)
Audi	8	0	0	2	10	(8)
Austin Rover Sterling	2	0	0	0	2	(2)
Bentley	2	0	1	0	3	(2)
Bertone	0	2	0	0	2	(1)
BMW	8	6	1	0	15	(17)
Chevrolet Spectrum	2	2	0	0	4	(2)
Chevrolet Sprint	1	3	0	0	4	(4)
Chrysler Conquest	0	1	0	0	1	(1)
Daihatsu	0	3	0	0	3	(0)
Dodge Colt	3	3	0	3	9	(7)
Eagle Medallion**	0	0	0	0	0	(0)
Ferrari	0	4	1	0	5	(5)
Ford Festiva	0	3	0	0	3	(0)
Honda***	0	10	0	0	10	(10)
Hyundai	5	3	0	0	8	(8)
Isuzu	3	5	0	0	8	(5)
Jaguar	2	2	1	0	5	(5)
Lamborghini	0	2	0	0	2	(2)
Lotus	0	2	0	0	2	(1)
Maserati	1	1	1	0	3	(4)
Mazda***	11	9	1	1	22	(20)
Mercedes-Benz	8	3	0	1	12	(13)
Mercury Merkur	1	1	0	0	2	(1)
Mercury Tracer	1	1	0	0	2	(0)
Mitsubishi	3	8	0	0	11	(15)
Nissan***	5	14	0	6	25	(24)
Peugeot	6	0	0	4	10	(13)
Plymouth Colt	3	3	0	3	9	(7)
Pontiac LeMans	2	3	0	0	5	(0)
Porsche	0	10	2	0	12	(9)
Renault Medallion**	2	0	0	1	3	(3)
Rolls-Royce	3	0	1	0	4	(4)
Saab	4	3	1	0	8	(8)
Subaru	7	15	0	8	30	(32)
Toyota***	9	20	1	5	35	(33)
TVR	0	0	0	0	0	(2)
Volkswagen***	4	2	3	3	12	(12)
Volvo	6	1	0	5	12	(11)
Yugo	0	3	0	0	3	(2)
1988 TOTALS	121	155	19	42	337	
TOTALS (March 1, 1987)	116	135	16	43		(310)

NOTES: *—Revised.
**—Renault Medallion will become Eagle Medallion in May 1988.
***—U.S.-built models of Honda, Mazda, Nissan, Toyota and Volkswagen are omitted from the import model count.

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IMPORTS TO COME E4
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A company-by-company roundup of 1988-model import cars.

IMPORT CAR SPECS E50
Need to know the wheelbase of a Lamborghini Countach? We've got it here.

COMING APRIL 11: AUTOMOTIVE NEWS TRUCK WORLD EXTRA

Industry Editor Al Fleming
Assistant Industry Editor Edward Peabody

CONSUMER EXPENDITURES
Per New Car (1)

Year	Domestic	Import	Average
1967	$ 3,310	$ 2,272	$ 3,212
1968	3,531	2,353	3,406
1969	3,697	2,496	3,557
1970	3,708	2,648	3,542
1971	3,919	2,769	3,742
1972	4,094	2,994	3,879
1973	4,[illegible]	3,344	4,052
1974	4,524	4,026	4,440
1975	5,084	4,384	4,950
1976	5,506	4,923	5,418
1977	5,985	5,072	5,814
1978	6,478	5,934	6,379
1979	6,889	6,704	6,847
1980	7,609	7,482	7,574
1981	8,912	8,896	8,910
1982	9,865	9,957	9,890
1983	10,559	10,873	10,640
1984	11,172	12,354	11,450
1985	11,720	12,697	11,967
1986	12,540	14,044	12,968
1987*	13,255	14,378	13,602

*—Estimated.
(1)—U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Average Transaction Price Per New Car."

IMPORT PERCENT OF NEW CAR SALES IN THE U.S.

1970	15.2
1971	15.2
1972	14.7
1973	15.3
1974	15.8
1975	18.2
1976	14.8
1977	18.5
1978	17.7
1979	21.9
1980	26.7
1981	27.3
1982	27.8
1983	26.0
1984	23.5
1985	25.7
1986	28.3
1987	31.0

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No surprise here (left): new cars have cost consumers more and more over the years. It appears imports were the better bargain until 1982. No surprise here, either (above): import market share has doubled since 1970.

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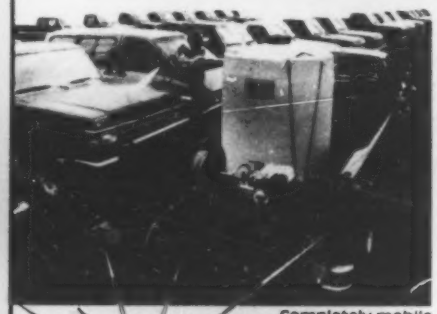

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AROUND THE WORLD

Canadian sales climb

Domestics, most imports gain in January

By Bill Vance
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

TORONTO — The new year got off to a bright start for all the domestic and the majority of the foreign automakers selling motor vehicles in Canada.

On the domestic side, all manufacturers registered increases in car and truck sales in January compared with a year ago.

Chrysler Canada posted an astonishing 77.1 percent sales increase in trucks. Chrysler's truck total includes the Dodge Caravan and Plymouth Voyager minivans.

General Motors of Canada saw car sales strengthen approximately 15 percent, while Ford Motor Co. of Canada had a more modest 2.3 percent gain.

Imported-car sales, with a few exceptions, also were stronger than a year ago, based on figures provided by the Canadian Importers Association.

Suzuki made the largest percentage advance in car sales, jumping from 72 a year ago to 349 this January, a 384.7 percent hike. The largest imported-car sales increase was recorded by Toyota with 4,223 units vs. 2,612 last year, a 61.7 percent improvement.

Honda, Volkswagen, Mazda, Subaru and BMW also enjoyed gains, while Hyundai, Nissan, Volvo, Mercedes-Benz and Jaguar posted losses. The most spectacular plunge was taken by Hyundai, whose sales dipped almost 50 percent, from 4,298 to 2,195.

Foreign trucks are receiving tough competition from the popular domestics. In spite of this, Toyota managed to more than double sales from 434 to 936 this January. Nissan and Mazda, on the other hand, saw some erosion in truck sales. Suzuki shot up dramatically, from 162 to 316 on the strength of the continuing popularity of its Samurai 4x4.

CANADIAN CAR AND TRUCK SALES

	Jan. 1987	Jan. 1988
GM	17,701	20,372
Ford	11,890	12,027
Chrysler	5,464	9,742
Domestic Trucks (including vans)		
GM	9,140	9,986
Ford	8,888	9,241
Chrysler	3,778	6,696
Foreign Cars		
Toyota	2,612	4,223
Honda	3,294	4,024
Volkswagen	1,511	2,323
Hyundai	4,298	2,195
Nissan	1,966	1,481
Mazda	1,360	1,418
Volvo	585	418
Subaru	75	187
BMW	225	301
Suzuki	72	349
Mercedes-Benz	317	251
Jaguar	170	166
Saab	136	98
Lada	58	61
Skoda	38	42
Foreign Trucks		
Toyota	434	936
Nissan	1,150	872
Mazda	528	427
Suzuki	162	316
Other Foreign	71	45

Production up 45% in Taiwan; 252,518 for '87

By Stephen Vines
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Taiwan's automakers recorded a banner year in 1987 with output of 252,518 units, an increase of 45 percent over 1986.

The slight easing of tariff levels also has encouraged importers, who are believed to have brought in a record 40,000 passenger cars last year, accounting for some 16 percent of sales.

Taiwan's largest motor company, Yue Loong, which once seemed to dominate the market without effort, suffered another significant cut in its market share. The company's share dropped from almost 38 percent in 1986 to 32 percent last year. At the beginning of the decade, it had well over 50 percent of the market.

Yue Loong's highly publicized launch of its Feeling series appears to have had little impact on its fortunes.

The biggest market share gainer in percentage points was Yeu Tyan, which assembles Peugeot vehicles under license from the French manufacturer. The company's market share rose from 8.3 percent in 1986 to 11.6 percent last year.

With the gradual entry of imports into the market, competition has become greater and retailers are having to operate on smaller margins. The high value of the Taiwanese currency is, however, helping to make imports look more attractive.

Nearly all domestically made vehicles are destined for the home market, which remains very buoyant. Until Yue Loong started producing its own models at the end of 1986, all vehicles were produced under license agreements with overseas manufacturers.

Taiwan currently is only a small exporter of engines. However, exports are expected to rise this year.

Taiwanese manufacturers believe that domestic sales will remain good this year, but some doubt whether last year's rate of increase can be maintained.

TAIWAN MOTOR VEHICLE PRODUCTION AND SALES 1986-1987

Company	Production 1987	Production 1986
China Motor (Mitsubishi)	28,663	23,735
Ford Lio Ho	86,848	38,616
Kuo Zui (trucks only)	4,399	2,548
San Fu (Renault)	18,586	13,701
San Yang (Kinglon)	35,057	29,257
Yue Loong (Nissan & own models)	80,725	49,387
Yeu Tyan (Peugeot)	28,255	13,695

DOMESTIC SALES AND MARKET SHARE

Company	Sales 1987	Market share (percent)	Sales 1986	Market share (percent)
China Motor	28,663	11.7	20,884	14.1
Ford Lio Ho	51,512	21.0	26,481	17.8
Kuo Zui	4,448	1.8	2,044	1.4
San Fu	18,710	7.6	13,036	8.8
San Yang	35,099	14.3	20,281	13.7
Yue Loong	78,359	32.0	62,515	37.6
Yeu Tyan	28,275	11.6	13,069	8.8

1987 output rises 25% in China

BEIJING, China — China National Automotive Industry Corp. reported that China produced 445,000 motor vehicles in 1987, an increase of 25 percent over 1986.

The No. 2 Motor Vehicle Plant in western Hubei province, the largest truck manufacturer in China, turned out 105,000 Dongfeng series vehicles, up 20 percent over 1986.

The No. 1 Motor Vehicle Plant in Changchun city produced 62,000 five-ton Jiefang Ca-141 trucks.

The Nanjing Motor Vehicle Plant produced 28,200 light trucks, 38 percent more than in 1986.

The Italian government has agreed to make $110 million in long-term, low-interest loans to help with the technological renovation of the Nanjing plant.

The money will be used to import Fiat technology and equipment so the plant can produce Fiat S-series light vehicles.

Domestic sales during the year exceeded 450,000, one-fifth more than in 1986. Motor vehicles in stock were reduced to 19,000 from the previous year's 30,000 units.

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AUCTION DATES

Chrysler Motors

March 15 — American Auto Auction, Walpole, Mass.; Golden Gate Auto Auction, Fremont, Calif.; Hatfield Auto Auction, Hatfield, Pa.; and Portland Auto Auction, Portland, Ore.

March 16 — Southwest Auto Auction, Phoenix, Ariz.; Butler Auto Auction, Gibsonia, Pa.; A.D.E. of Birmingham, Birmingham, Ala.; Minneapolis Auto Auction, Plymouth, Minn.; and Denver Auto Auction, Aurora, Colo.

March 17 — Clanton's Auto Auction, Darlington, S.C.; Northway Exchange, Clifton Park, N.Y.; and Metro Auto Auction of Kansas City, Lee's Summit, Mo.

March 18 — Manheim Auto Auction, Manheim, Pa.

March 22 — South Seattle Auto Auction, Kent, Wash.; Florida Auto Auction of Orlando, Ocoee, Fla.; Arena Auto Auction, Chicago; Hatfield Auto Auction, Hatfield, Pa.; Riverside Auto Auction, Riverside, Calif.; and Dallas Auto Auction, Grand Prairie, Texas

March 23 — Nashville Auto Auction, Nashville, Tenn.; Southern Auto Auction, Warehouse Point, Conn.; and Columbus Fair Auto Auction, Obetz, Ohio

Ford Motor Co.

March 15 — Bay Cities Auto Auction Inc., Hayward, Calif.

March 16 — Lakeland Auto Auction, Lakeland, Fla.

March 17 — Denver Auto Auction, Aurora, Colo.; Aptco Auto Auction, Taylor, Mich.; Interstate Auto Auction, Mercer, Pa.; Southwest Auto Auction, Phoenix, Ariz.; Skyline Auto Exchange, Fairfield, N.J.; and 166 Auto Auction, Springfield, Mo.

March 22 — South Seattle Auto Auction, Kent, Wash.

March 23 — Columbus Fair Auto Auction, Obetz, Ohio; Clanton's Auto Auction, Darlington, S.C.; Mississippi Auto Auction, Hattiesburg, Miss.; Southern California Auto Auction, Fontana, Calif.; Newburgh Auto Auction Inc., Newburgh, N.Y.; and Salt Lake Auto Auction, Salt Lake City

March 24 — Baltimore-Washington Auto Exchange, Baltimore; Greater Chicago Auto Auction, Chicago; and St. Louis Auto Auction, Bridgeton, Mo.

March 29 — Harrisonburg Auto Auction, Harrisonburg, Va., and Bay Cities Auto Auction Inc., Hayward, Calif.

General Motors

March 15 — Southern Auto Auction, East Windsor, Conn., and Dallas Auto Auction, Grand Prairie, Texas

March 16 — Atlanta Auto Auction, Atlanta; Baltimore-Washington Auto Exchange, Baltimore; Clanton's Auto Auction, Darlington, S.C.; Indianapolis Auto Auction, Indianapolis; Omaha Auto Auction, Omaha, Neb.; Mississippi Auto Auction, Hattiesburg, Miss.; and Southern Auto Auction, Fontana, Calif.

March 17 — Arena Auto Auction, Chicago; Ohio Auto Auction, Grove City, Ohio; St. Louis Auto Auction, Bridgeton, Mo.; and Utah Auto Auction, West Bountiful, Utah

March 23 — Hatfield Auto Auction, Hatfield, Pa.; Metro Auto Auction of Kansas City, Lee's Summit, Mo.; Minneapolis Northstar Auto Auction, Shakopee, Minn.; and Golden Gate Auto Auction, Fremont, Calif.

March 24 — Butler Auto Auction, Gibsonia, Pa.; Aptco Auto Auction, Taylor, Mich.; Nashville Auto Auction, Nashville; and Southwest Auto Auction, Phoenix, Ariz.

Used Car Sales
Auction Averages

March 1988	$5,350
Month ago	$5,039
Year ago	$5,747

Model Breakdown
Auction Averages

	MARCH 1988	FEB 1988	JAN 1987
1988	$10,382	$10,741	$8,839
1987	$8,487	$8,443	$8,436
1986	$6,737	$6,732	$6,516
1985	$5,748	$5,731	$5,501
1984	$4,359	$4,363	$4,349
1983	$3,707	$3,689	$3,362
1982	$2,471	$2,454	$2,303
1981	$1,842	$1,817	$1,926
Overall Average	$5,350	$5,309	$4,841

Volvo backs CAFE rollback to 26.0 mpg for 1989-90

By Matt DeLorenzo
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

WASHINGTON — Volvo Cars of North America told NHTSA it backs an industry petition to roll back the government's fuel-economy standard.

The importer wants the standard reduced from 27.5 mpg to 26.0 mpg for the 1989 and 1990 model years.

Volvo said it supports a Feb. 12 petition by the Automobile Importers of America (of which it is a member) to set a lower corporate average fuel economy standard "so as to best balance the goal of fuel economy with other factors the public wants and needs."

Saying its customers prefer safety over fuel economy, the company said it has introduced almost all of the fuel-economy-improving technology envisioned by the U.S. Congress when it set the higher limit, yet its projected CAFE for the 1988-90 model years will be 26.0 mpg.

"These changes have produced a 26 percent gain in CAFE since 1979," the letter said, adding that the improvement has been made in spite of recent weight increases caused by adding new safety-related features.

Among those features are antilock brakes and air bags, which the company said have added 87 pounds to some car models.

Citing stable fuel prices and supply, Volvo said a customer survey showed that "Volvo buyers consistently rate safety well above fuel economy in importance to their purchase decision." The study showed fuel economy dropping from 10th to 21st place in a list of 32 topics customers ranked by importance when making their purchase decision.

Volvo said it found that the majority of its new-car owners are satisfied with the city and highway fuel economy of their cars.

While Volvo has attempted to use diesels as a means of meeting CAFE, it said that increases in diesel fuel prices relative to decreases in gasoline costs, coupled with tighter emission-control requirements for diesels, have forced it to abandon that market.

The company concluded that it has taken all practical steps to improve its CAFE.

"Although we have made substantial gains over the years, and presently offer some models about the 27.5 mpg level, this goal still remains out of reach as a fleet average," Volvo said. "The fuel situation has led consumers to demand more performance and interior room, but without any sacrifice in safety, especially in our case."

Volvo maintained that its information supports the central point in the Automobile Importers of America petition, that the higher standard will restrict consumer choice of new-car models.

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TRADE

FROM PAGE 1

1.7 percent for the year.

In December 1987, U.S. exports of passenger cars and light trucks were 48.4 percent ahead of December 1986.

South Korea, Mexico and Brazil each made big inroads on the U.S. passenger-car market in 1987. Imports of Korean passenger cars climbed 136.2 percent in 1987 to 399,856 vehicles with a value of $2.1 billion. Korea shipped 169,309 vehicles to the United States in 1986 with a value of $797.3 million.

Imports of Mexican passenger cars increased 200.8 percent in 1987 to 126,266 vehicles with a value of $1.2 billion. Mexican passenger car imports totaled 41,983 vehicles in 1986 with a value of $433.2 million.

Brazil exported 48,169 vehicles to the United States in 1987 with a value of $239.2 million. Volkswagen of America's importation of the Fox in 1987 accounted for nearly all of that trade. Brazilian shipments to the United States amounted to only 207 vehicles in 1986.

U.S. AUTOMOTIVE TRADE BY VALUE

(x $1,000)

Passenger cars

Country	Trade	Dec. 1986	Dec. 1987	Jan.-Dec. 1986	Jan.-Dec. 1987
Japan	Export	4,548	8,973	42,336	72,290
	Import	1,687,297	1,923,355	21,080,655	21,304,737
Canada	Export	351,264	427,401	5,827,382	5,727,152
	Import	1,042,241	1,023,194	11,816,660	10,185,353
West Germany	Import	723,474	778,168	8,121,239	8,901,850
South Korea	Import	82,379	244,498	797,282	2,061,457
Sweden	Import	166,572	179,238	1,628,973	1,941,488
Mexico	Import	45,921	86,475	433,249	1,176,374
Yugoslavia	Import	9,351	10,210	96,409	126,242
United Kingdom	Import	45,711	136,609	720,937	1,193,837
Italy	Import	9,566	10,899	174,799	177,965
France	Import	6,050	8,473	123,413	255,998
Brazil	Import	0	41,511	839	239,201
Others	Export	35,186	90,168	384,105	889,772
	Import	4,207	35,074	127,489	293,501
Car Total	Export	390,998	526,542	6,253,823	6,689,214
	Import	3,804,782	4,477,704	45,301,947	47,858,003
Trade Balance		(3,413,784)	(3,951,162)	(39,048,124)	(41,168,789)
Light trucks (up to 10,000 lbs. GVW)					
Canada	Export	68,328	156,005	1,461,929	1,595,619
	Import	124,670	228,476	2,465,760	2,231,020
Japan	Import	291,054	326,419	4,899,587	4,278,125
Mexico	Import	10,698	212	136,281	90,089
Others	Export	10,564	14,548	125,815	207,113
	Import	2,663	11,393	60,027	71,946
Truck Total	Export	78,892	170,553	1,587,743	1,802,732
	Import	429,115	626,500	7,561,656	6,671,181
Trade Balance		(350,223)	(455,947)	(5,973,913)	(4,868,449)
CAR AND TRUCK TOTAL	Export	469,890	697,095	7,841,566	8,491,946
	Import	4,233,897	5,104,204	52,863,603	54,529,184
TRADE BALANCE		(3,764,007)	(4,407,109)	(45,022,037)	(46,037,238)
TOTAL U.S. Merchandise trade (customs value)	Export	18,522,700	24,801,400	226,808,100	252,865,800
	Import	29,853,600	35,443,500	366,083,400	405,900,600
TRADE BALANCE		(11,330,900)	(10,642,100)	(139,255,300)	(153,034,800)

U.S. AUTOMOTIVE TRADE BY QUANTITY

Passenger cars

Country	Trade	Dec. 1986	Dec. 1987	Jan.-Dec. 1986	Jan.-Dec. 1987
Japan	Export	269	656	2,750	4,721
	Import	191,537	219,217	2,618,709	2,417,509
Canada	Export	40,192	41,637	638,732	560,453
	Import	96,031	92,719	1,162,226	926,927
West Germany	Import	36,614	37,410	451,701	377,542
South Korea	Import	16,909	46,721	169,309	399,856
Sweden	Import	12,718	11,422	148,700	138,565
Mexico	Import	4,835	10,116	41,983	126,266
Yugoslavia	Import	3,780	4,027	38,695	49,445
United Kingdom	Import	1,510	4,575	27,506	50,059
Italy	Import	490	253	11,830	8,648
France	Import	475	636	10,869	26,707
Brazil	Import	0	7,900	207	48,169
Others	Export	2,661	6,882	30,116	66,235
	Import	274	2,543	9,563	19,317
Car total	Export	43,122	49,175	671,607	631,409
	Import	365,176	437,539	4,691,298	4,589,010
Trade balance		(322,054)	(388,364)	(4,019,691)	(3,957,601)
Light trucks (up to 10,000 lbs. GVW)					
Canada	Export	7,498	14,975	160,859	163,842
	Import	13,619	25,916	270,624	226,538
Japan	Import	54,717	55,126	976,012	772,758
Mexico	Import	1,425	0	18,107	11,296
Others	Export	828	1,362	10,135	16,617
	Import	9	52	70	486
Truck Total	Export	8,326	16,337	170,794	180,460
	Import	69,780	81,099	1,264,813	1,011,078
Trade Balance		(61,454)	(64,762)	(1,094,019)	(830,618)
CAR AND TRUCK TOTAL	Export	51,488	65,512	842,401	811,869
	Import	434,956	518,638	5,956,111	5,600,088
TRADE BALANCE		(383,468)	(453,126)	(5,113,710)	(4,788,219)

Compiled by Automotive News from official statistics of the U.S. Commerce Department, as reported by the U.S. International Trade Commission. Exports of gasoline, diesel and oil to the Mexico

Ex-commerce official cleared of misconduct

By Geoff Sundstrom
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

WASHINGTON — A government investigation has found "no evidence" that Robert E. Watkins, former U.S. Commerce Department deputy assistant secretary for automotive affairs, violated federal conflict of interest laws when he sought employment with foreign automakers last fall.

Watkins left the commerce department last year after it became public that he had formally proposed creation of a trade association representing foreign automotive investors and had asked to lead it.

The report was requested by Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, after Watkins' activities became public. It found fault with Watkins' "participation in one matter affecting foreign-owned vehicle manufacturers (that) violated the Standards of Conduct" prescribed for federal employees by the White House.

Specifically, the General Accounting Office said Watkins should not have co-chaired a Sept. 24, 1987, meeting of an industry advisory group at which confidential information was discussed regarding the U.S. automotive parts industry.

Watkins participated in the meeting after sending letters to a variety of foreign-owned automotive companies seeking employment. The meeting was held to discuss negotiations between the United States and Japan over increased purchases of U.S.-manufactured auto parts.

The General Accounting Office said that before leaving office Watkins discussed employment possibilities with representatives of Mazda Motor Corp., Nissan Motor Co., the Japanese Auto Parts Industry Association, Hyundai Motor America, General Motors, the Automobile Importers of America, Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A., Northern Telecom Inc., Motorola and the American Furniture Manufacturers Association.

"Watkins should have been advised to recuse himself from any matters affecting those to whom he dispatched letters seeking employment . . ."

— GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

The General Accounting Office report said in part, "In Mr. Watkins' particular case, we believe that he did not receive adequate advice from the (Commerce Department) Office of General Counsel. . . . Mr. Watkins should have been advised to recuse himself from any matters affecting those to whom he dispatched letters seeking employment unless he intended to engage in a mass mailing that did nothing more than forward his resume."

Watkins resigned his post in the Commerce Department following congressional demands that he be fired.

In a letter sent last week to U.S. Commerce Secretary C. William Verity, Dingell said, "While I am appalled at Mr. Watkins' actions in trying to promote a trade association by actively soliciting participation of foreign entities that were within the purview of his official responsibilities, I am even more disturbed that your General Counsel's office was so ill-informed about available ethics guidelines and interpretations."

During Watkins' term as deputy assistant secretary, his office had responsibility for automotive issues pertaining to the U.S.-Canadian Free Trade Agreement, the GATT Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, review of the Generalized System of Preferences, Harmonized System of Tariff Nomenclature, Foreign Trade Zones, Japanese Voluntary Export Restraints, and Market-Oriented, Sector-Specific talks with Japan on trade in automotive parts.

GM

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Fairfax, Kan., plant can build. However, the plant is on a gradual acceleration schedule.

Buick, meanwhile, is asking for production increases for Electra, Skylark, LeSabre and Century. Buick's sales for the calendar year were up 31 percent at the end of February. The division's inventory was 56 days on March 1, down from 75 a month earlier.

Buick has incentives covering Regal, Park Avenue, LeSabre, Electra, Century and Skylark running through March 31.

In addition, Buick will begin production April 1 of the LeSabre Olympia sedan to commemorate Buick being the official car of the 1988 U.S. Olympic Committee. Special dealer promotions for the car are planned for this spring and summer.

Oldsmobile also is requesting production increases for most of its models. The division wants more Calais, Cutlass Ciera, Delta 88 and Cutlass Supreme models. It is not asking for increases in Toronado or 98 production, General Manager William Lane said, because those cars sell best in the early part of the model year. Firenza production ends later this spring.

Oldsmobile sales at the end of February were up 15 percent for the calendar year, and its inventory was 56 days on March 1, down from 66 on Feb. 1.

Oldsmobile has incentives covering Delta 88, 98, Calais and Ciera running through March 31.

Lane said the division will take all of the Cutlass Supreme models it can get. However, the plant in Doraville, Ga., also is on a gradual acceleration plan.

Cadillac General Manager John O. Grettenberger said that for the first time since 1985, the division has a backlog of orders for Eldorado, which was stretched and restyled for the 1988 model year.

Production at the Detroit-Hamtramck plant already has been increased by 4,700 units through June by scheduling overtime. Grettenberger said no more production will be added, and the plant will not add a second shift anytime soon.

Plants likely to feel the greatest impact from the upcoming production increases are the Willow Run plant in Ypsilanti, Mich., which produces Bonneville and Delta 88; the Buick City plant in Flint, Mich., which produces Buick LeSabre and Delta 88; and the two N-car (Calais, Grand Am, Skylark) plants in Lansing, Mich.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Truck output sets record; cars tumble

By Kathy Barbaglia
AUTOMOTIVE NEWS STAFF REPORTER

U.S. truck production for February set a record while car output dipped to a five-year low for that month.

Truckmakers built 351,498 units last month, the most ever for February and the highest monthly build since last March when 358,622 trucks were assembled.

Last month's truck production was 6.07 percent more than January's 331,392 and 8.94 percent more than the year-ago month's 322,655.

Last week's targeted truck output totaled 86,782, slightly above (0.68 percent) the prior week's 86,196 and 7.86 percent more than the year-ago week's 80,458.

Car production during February totaled 563,508 units, the lowest for that month since 1983 when 511,981 cars were assembled.

February's car output was 18.11 percent more than January's 477,103 but 19.06 percent below the year-ago month's 696,195.

Automakers scheduled 133,216 units last week, 6.08 percent more than the previous week's 125,578 but 20.30 percent less than the year-ago week's 167,143.

Last week's estimated car production was shared as follows: General Motors, 46.07 percent; Ford Motor Co., 24.78 percent; Chrysler Motors, 17.34 percent; Honda of America Manufacturing Inc., 5.52 percent; New United Motor Manufacturing Inc., 2.44 percent; Volkswagen of America, 1.50 percent; Mazda Motor Manufacturing (U.S.A.) Corp., 1.24 percent; and Nissan Motor Manufacturing Co. U.S.A., 1.11 percent.

Ford's Wayne, Mich., plant resumed output today. The plant had been idle for changeover to the 1988½ Escort.

Trucks hit peak in Canada, too

Canadian truck output of 80,177 units for February was the highest ever for that month and was the highest total for any month since January 1986 when 81,115 were produced.

Last month's truck output was 8.83 percent more than January's 73,674 and 22.64 percent more than the year-ago month's 65,377.

Scheduled production of 20,163 trucks last week was slightly higher (0.39 percent) than the prior week's 20,085 and 13.89 percent more than the year-ago week's 17,704.

Car output for February totaled 91,922, the highest for that month since 1979 when 93,463 cars were built and the highest for any month since March 1986 when 99,232 cars were assembled.

February's car production was 6.37 percent more than January's 86,420 and 16.14 percent more than the year-ago month's 79,146.

Last week's targeted car output of 22,427 was 3.93 percent below the previous week's 23,344 but 27.33 percent more than the year-ago week's 17,613.

Chrysler Motors' Bramalea, Ontario, plant is idle until March 21 to make a change in the production mix.

U.S. CAR	Week Ended March 12, 1988	Week Ended March 14, 1987	Week Ended March 5, 1988	Feb. Total	Jan. 1 to March 12, 1988	Jan. 1 to March 14, 1987
Alliance	0	730	0	0	0	7,690
Total Eagle	0	730	0	0	0	7,690
Horizon	1,700	0	1,710	7,565	16,988	32,326
Sundance	2,100	2,607	2,129	8,988	21,140	22,786
Reliant	2,300	2,992	1,281	7,488	15,357	27,456
Caravelle	500	1,289	0	1,528	3,381	12,718
Gran Fury	150	0	130	1,216	2,324	4
Total Plymouth	6,750	6,886	5,250	26,785	59,200	95,288
LeBaron K	500	2,284	589	1,091	2,710	18,133
LeBaron J	1,950	1,546	1,907	5,312	8,796	16,088
LeBaron GTS	150	980	193	591	1,554	8,275
N. Yorker E-Class	0	2,315	0	0	0	17,358
N. Yorker C-Class	2,150	0	2,177	9,636	19,761	0
Fifth Avenue	250	1,003	415	4,739	10,471	2,132
Total Chrysler	5,000	8,108	5,281	21,371	43,312	61,906
Omni	1,650	0	1,680	7,512	16,627	27,744
Daytona	1,900	835	1,912	4,539	7,959	8,128
Shadow	2,100	2,214	2,241	9,512	21,958	20,400
Aries	2,300	2,476	664	4,808	12,217	23,173
Dodge 600	400	1,240	0	1,424	2,886	10,547
Dynasty	2,400	0	2,382	10,491	21,754	0
Lancer	200	622	250	1,128	2,414	5,795
Diplomat	400	0	237	1,925	3,637	4
Total Dodge	11,350	7,387	9,336	41,337	89,852	95,791
CHRYSLER MOTORS	23,100	23,113	19,847	89,473	192,184	260,696
Escort	2,352	8,298	2,352	32,756	72,352	76,848
Mustang	4,625	4,539	4,553	16,296	44,860	46,738
Tempo	3,802	4,380	3,769	16,230	40,404	41,463
Taurus	7,953	9,692	7,961	32,952	76,429	101,416
Thunderbird	3,355	3,388	2,897	13,983	32,229	30,588
Total Ford Div.	22,177	30,217	21,532	114,217	289,274	297,053
Lynx	0	1,082	0	0	0	13,157
Topaz	1,593	1,099	1,790	6,289	15,611	12,941
Cougar	2,412	3,366	2,873	10,251	25,466	40,316
Sable	2,632	2,973	2,954	11,694	24,610	30,994
Total Mercury	6,637	8,511	7,287	28,230	65,689	97,410
Continental	936	413	1,073	3,799	8,800	3,825
Mark VII	464	813	547	2,201	5,401	5,714
Lincoln	2,800	3,074	3,240	12,006	29,983	28,808
Total Lincoln	4,200	4,100	4,860	18,006	43,984	38,147
Total L-M Division	10,837	12,611	12,147	46,243	109,673	135,557
FORD MOTOR CO.	33,014	42,828	33,679	160,460	378,947	432,610
Skyhawk	1,099	983	0	1,902	6,109	9,901
Skylark/Somerset	380	1,973	372	1,342	5,002	19,033
Century	1,810	4,426	812	4,752	10,338	43,264
Regal (rwd)	0	1,063	0	0	0	9,933
Riviera	138	0	179	967	1,418	5,231
Electra	1,003	2,420	1,258	5,283	13,257	22,789
LeSabre (fwd)	2,450	2,575	2,409	10,245	24,100	21,127
LeSabre (rwd)	220	327	187	451	1,248	4,639
Reatta	128	0	94	370	676	0
Total Buick	7,238	13,967	5,311	25,312	62,145	135,867
Cimmaron	104	501	230	1,216	2,619	4,617
Eldorado	1,006	0	1,155	3,361	6,018	3,558
Seville	723	0	709	2,487	4,264	8,450
Brougham (rwd)	0	2,193	0	1,066	0	19,808
DeVille (fwd)	4,000	4,026	3,984	16,804	38,832	37,717
Allante	66	49	66	253	401	471
Total Cadillac	5,898	6,769	6,144	25,217	52,134	72,621
Cavalier	6,550	7,948	7,048	28,183	63,883	76,114
Camaro	1,040	0	981	4,823	9,235	21,243
Celebrity	4,450	8,880	0	18,437	29,030	62,631
Corsica/Beretta	8,980	5,124	8,993	34,867	75,545	54,584
Monte Carlo	0	2,518	0	0	0	14,646
Caprice	3,640	5,970	3,486	18,285	41,774	46,543
Corvette	440	846	451	1,893	4,304	8,441
Total Chevrolet	25,080	31,086	20,959	108,488	223,771	302,202
Calais	2,020	2,645	2,106	8,678	20,663	26,123
Firenza	471	294	0	959	2,998	4,706
Cutlass Ciera	0	3,615	0	0	0	42,567
Cutlass Supreme*	1,847	2,535	1,847	11,091	18,110	10,903
Toronado	405	0	509	2,055	3,197	3,601
88 (fwd)	2,560	5,063	3,223	10,441	29,045	49,221
98 (rwd)	170	383	217	1,013	2,595	4,113
Olds 98	1,815	2,259	1,817	7,655	17,329	19,367
Total Oldsmobile	9,088	16,793	9,719	41,892	90,203	160,633
Sunbird	1,691	2,884	2,066	9,438	21,259	25,211
Grand Am	4,800	5,817	4,772	20,248	48,079	53,035
Firebird	1,020	1,012	852	3,320	8,264	16,746
Grand Prix*	1,823	0	1,823	10,204	20,048	0
Pontiac 6000	2,415	2,303	2,086	4,378	8,196	17,823
Bonneville	1,584	3,159	1,972	8,344	17,215	31,758
Safari/Parisienne	125	388	158	582	1,214	2,580
Fiero	610	1,199	572	2,019	3,010	7,644
Total Pontiac	14,068	16,772	14,321	58,529	118,177	154,807
GENERAL MOTORS	61,372	86,087	58,454	255,428	549,430	826,330
HONDA	7,350	7,351	7,393	29,468	70,495	70,206
Civic	1,907	1,738	1,785	6,842	16,848	26,966
Accord	5,453	5,613	5,608	22,626	53,647	43,238
MAZDA	1,652	0	1,504	4,908	11,117	0
NISSAN	1,478	2,972	1,344	5,612	13,516	29,180
NUMMI	3,250	3,853	3,330	13,724	31,529	40,687
Corolla	1,200	848	1,236	5,080	11,064	10,751
Nova	2,050	3,005	2,094	8,644	20,465	29,936
VOLKSWAGEN	2,000	1,939	2,027	4,434	11,799	15,925
Golf/GTI	1,300	1,689	1,327	2,854	7,899	13,975
Jetta	700	250	700	1,580	3,900	1,950
Total Cars, U.S.	133,216	167,143	125,578	563,508	1,258,997	1,675,633
Total Cars, Canada	22,427	17,613	23,344	91,922	220,110	189,064
U.S., Canada Cars	155,643	184,756	148,922	655,430	1,479,107	1,864,697
U.S., Canada Cars and Trucks	282,598	282,918	255,289	1,087,105	2,510,749	2,811,645

Monthly estimates may contain error of one or two units due to rounding.

CANADIAN CAR	Week Ended March 12, 1988	Week Ended March 14, 1987	Week Ended March 5, 1988	Feb. Total	Jan. 1 to March 12, 1988	Jan. 1 to March 14, 1987
Eagle	0	—	0	0	0	—
Premier	0	—	1,735	6,815	14,440	—
CHRYSLER MOTORS	0	139	1,735	6,815	14,440	1,936
Escort	0	—	0	0	0	—
Lynx	0	—	0	0	0	—
Tempo	4,037	—	4,330	16,453	40,824	—
Topaz	1,723	—	1,345	6,238	15,308	—
Crown Victoria	2,899	—	2,909	11,954	28,315	—
Grand Marquis	2,861	—	2,856	11,851	27,592	—
FORD MOTOR CO.	11,520	11,376	11,445	46,496	112,037	111,875
Celebrity	335	—	320	1,046	3,675	—
Cutlass Ciera	5,295	—	5,234	17,356	41,086	—
Cutlass Supreme	0	—	0	0	0	—
Grand Prix	0	—	0	0	0	—
Pontiac 6000	580	—	632	3,524	9,376	—
Regal	3,912	—	3,153	13,629	32,252	—
GENERAL MOTORS	10,072	5,658	9,339	35,557	86,389	72,086
HONDA	700	195	701	2,586	6,154	1,317
VOLVO	135	225	124	466	1,120	2,250
Total Cars, Canada	22,427	17,613	23,344	91,922	220,110	189,064

U.S. TRUCK☆	Week Ended March 12, 1988	Week Ended March 14, 1987	Week Ended March 5, 1988	Feb. Total	Jan. 1 to March 12, 1988	Jan. 1 to March 14, 1987
Caravan	2,300	—	2,016	8,312	19,970	—
Dakota	2,800	—	2,774	5,005	22,867	—
Mini-Ram Van	300	—	384	1,394	3,188	—
Pickups	1,300	—	1,356	2,429	11,092	—
Total Dodge	6,700	5,426	6,510	17,140	56,917	49,699
Cherokee	3,150	—	3,180	15,311	35,586	—
Commanche	850	—	869	4,204	9,741	—
Grand Wagoneer	300	—	350	1,120	2,744	—
Pickups	0	—	0	0	0	—
Wagoneer	150	—	259	1,109	2,637	—
Total Jeep	4,450	4,507	4,658	21,744	50,686	44,942
Voyager	2,050	—	2,027	7,910	18,549	—
Total Plymouth	2,050	—	2,027	7,910	18,549	—
CHRYSLER MOTORS	13,200	9,933	13,195	46,794	126,154	94,635
Aerostar	4,455	—	4,435	20,142	46,019	—
Bronco	1,294	—	1,243	5,264	12,586	—
Bronco II	2,951	—	2,982	12,573	30,564	—
Econoline	5,110	—	5,230	21,616	51,139	—
Heavy trucks	1,332	—	1,376	5,555	13,305	—
Light trucks	11,847	—	10,362	43,043	101,286	—
Ranger	7,286	—	7,422	31,132	73,274	—
Total Ford Div.	34,075	32,895	33,050	139,325	328,175	326,519
FORD MOTOR CO.	34,075	32,895	33,050	139,325	328,175	326,519
Astro	3,812	—	3,290	15,204	35,478	—
Blazer	622	—	634	2,213	5,609	—
Mediums/Heavies	375	—	294	1,275	5,275	—
P-Model	0	—	882	3,853	8,502	—
Pickups	6,770	—	6,979	26,416	62,501	—
S-10	5,151	—	5,519	23,241	54,110	—
S-10 Blazer	3,561	—	4,064	13,643	29,823	—
Sportsvan/Van	1,392	—	1,503	5,846	13,511	—
Suburban	1,678	—	1,752	5,921	14,671	—
Total Chevrolet	24,361	23,730	24,917	97,612	229,480	225,650
Jimmy	194	—	198	699	1,792	—
Mediums/Heavies	875	—	961	4,056	9,156	—
P-Model	0	—	149	362	724	—
Pickups	2,650	—	1,863	8,777	21,394	—
S-15	1,945	—	1,724	6,529	15,228	—
S-15 Jimmy	519	—	289	4,160	7,085	—
Safari	977	—	784	3,869	9,068	—
Suburban	770	—	740	2,800	7,573	—
Vandura/Rally Vans	958	—	792	3,540	9,484	—
Total GMC	9,218	8,117	7,500	35,212	81,504	77,857
GENERAL MOTORS	33,579	31,847	32,417	132,824	310,984	303,507
NAVISTAR	1,740	1,613	1,592	7,344	17,564	15,547
NISSAN	1,438	1,820	3,192	13,861	30,599	17,196
AM GENERAL*	450	50	450	1,800	4,500	500
MISCELLANEOUS*	2,300	2,300	2,300	9,660	23,000	23,000
Total Trucks, U.S.	86,782	80,458	86,196	351,498	840,976	780,706

CANADIAN TRUCK	Week Ended March 12, 1988	Week Ended March 14, 1987	Week Ended March 5, 1988	Feb. Total	Jan. 1 to March 12, 1988	Jan. 1 to March 14, 1987
Caravan	3,048	—	3,136	12,746	30,514	—
Mini-Ram Van	336	—	335	976	2,504	—
Ram Wagon	590	—	528	1,719	4,396	—
Ram Van	1,300	—	1,378	4,333	10,995	—
Total Dodge	5,274	8,352	5,377	19,776	48,309	88,606
Voyager	2,760	—	2,799	12,118	28,569	—
Total Plymouth	2,760	—	2,799	12,118	28,569	—
Wrangler	1,018	—	1,044	4,461	10,033	—
Total Jeep	1,018	650	1,044	4,461	10,033	6,301
CHRYSLER MOTORS	9,052	9,002	9,220	38,375	86,911	94,907
FORD MTR. (lt. trks.)	3,648	3,350	3,658	15,013	35,810	33,164
Light trucks	3,707	—	3,102	13,403	31,784	—
Vans	1,478	—	1,316	5,544	12,966	—
Total Chevrolet	5,185	—	4,418	18,947	44,750	—
Light trucks	1,573	—	1,982	6,574	15,373	—
Vans	480	—	600	2,385	5,615	—
Total GMC	2,053	—	2,582	8,959	20,988	—
GENERAL MOTORS	7,238	5,153	6,960	27,906	65,738	36,187
NAVISTAR	225	199	227	863	2,207	1,984
Total Trks., Canada	20,163	17,704	20,085	80,177	190,698	166,242
U.S., Canada Trks.	106,945	98,162	106,281	431,675	1,031,642	946,948

☆—Includes window van production. *—Estimated.
Note: Includes all General Motors' passenger-carrying vehicles, except ambulances, hearses and taxicabs. Ford includes Lincoln-Mercury vehicles. Chrysler includes vehicles for Maxi, Mini-Ram, Sportwagon, Prowler, Freightliner, Mercedes-Benz, etc.